



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Maryland's Social Services Agency



MEDIA RELEASE

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NORTHERN MARYLAND COUNTIES CELEBRATE SOCIAL WORK MONTH BY NAMING SOCIAL WORKERS OF THE YEAR

*Carroll, Cecil, Harford and Howard Counties
Applaud Child Welfare and Adult Services Workers*

BALTIMORE – March is National Social Work Appreciation Month and local departments of social services in each jurisdiction are honoring workers who represent the best in the profession.

Carroll County Department of Social Services is honoring **Susan Beard**, their sole Resource Home worker.

Cecil County Department of Social Services tapped **Nicole Meekins**, a 16-year veteran of their agency.

Harford County Department of Social Services honoree is **Deborah DiEdoardo**, an Adoptions worker

Howard County Department of Social Services selected **Darlene Waldt**, a Foster Care worker.

Social workers and caseworkers perform a wide range of essential tasks including determining the safety of children, identifying new foster parents, helping facilitate adoption services and ensuring the well being of elderly residents who live independently. They touch the lives of thousands of vulnerable children and adults in Maryland and across the country.

“Our social workers are dedicated professionals that strive daily to make a positive difference in the lives of others,” said Department of Human Resources Secretary Brenda Donald. “Now, more than ever, they are the vital link between Maryland’s most vulnerable population and an array of support services that this population needs.” Last year, over 600,000 Marylanders received one or more of the services provided by the Department of Human Resources and its 24 local Departments of Social Services (DSS) across the state.

Each of the Northern Maryland counties, (Carroll, Cecil, Harford and Howard) have selected a worker of the year that best represents the “*purpose and possibilities*” in social work – this year’s national social work appreciation month theme. Supervisors, co-workers and peers selected the honoree from workers that exhibit the best qualities of the profession.

- Martin O'Malley, Governor
- Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor
- Brenda Donald, Secretary

Susan. Beard has worked for the Carroll County Department of Social Services since 2001. She is Carroll's only Resource Home Worker. Susan is a true team player. You don't have to ask her to help out. She takes it upon herself to pitch in where needed and is always willing to assist her fellow co-workers. She sets high standards for herself and strives every day to meet those standards.

Cecil County DSS's **Nicole Meekins** is currently an Adult Services Coordinator. She has worked in foster care and child protective services and as a specialized investigator at the Child Advocacy Center. Nicole takes time to assess individual situations and works with her staff to assure that each case is handled with the kind of attention and care warranted.

The Harford County DSS honoree is **Deborah DiEdoardo**. Peers, supervisors, and the legal community recognize Ms. DiEdoardo as an extremely skilled adoption social worker. She has a natural ability to engage families and protect their dignity as she works with them through the very difficult process of terminating parental rights. She is a true advocate for children and has a thorough understanding of the importance of permanency for every child.

Darlene Waldt is a Foster Care worker with is the Howard County DSS. Ms. Waldt not only coordinates and conducts the Life Skills classes for foster children who are living independently; she also carries a full caseload of children age 14 and over. Darlene has had many successes with the Independent Living population, working extremely hard to find placements for teens that are often very hard to place.

Each of the honorees has been invited to attend an appreciation luncheon to be held on Monday, March 30, 2009. Lt. Governor Anthony Brown will bring remarks at the event.

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The Maryland Department of Human Resources is the state's social service provider. The agency collaborates with 24 local jurisdictions to: provide foster care, adoption and protective services to children; collect and distribute child support payments; and provide temporary cash, food stamps and medical assistance to families. It also administers programs for homeless persons, refugees, migrant workers, victims of crime and women who are displaced, battered or assaulted. Last year, DHR served 638,000 people in need. In terms of its annual budget, DHR is Maryland's fourth largest state agency.